

SPIRITUAL WIVES.

Their Career in Utah Is Ended at Last.

THE DECIDING "REVELATION."

Forty-seven Years of Actual Polygamy and Thirty-eight Years of Acknowledged "Plurality" Ended by a Decree of the Mormon Hierarchy.

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 "Dost think because thou art virtuous there will be no more cakes and ale?" was the emphatic question put by one of Shakespeare's characters. The inference



JOSEPH SMITH.

was, No! For thirty-eight years, to wit, since the autumn conference of 1852, the "Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints," as the Mormons call themselves, have been taunting the United States in the same way. They have all the time insisted that no monogamic people could be virtuous, that in "celestial marriage" only could humanity do its prettiest.

They have yielded at last. Swearing they would ne'er submit they submitted, and at the last semi-annual conference of the church, held in Salt Lake City in early October, the Tabernacle full of saints, 10,000 or more, unanimously voted to abandon polygamy, and "hereafter to obey in spirit and in letter the laws of the United States." It was a bitter pill, and to their credit be it said they did not attempt to disguise that fact. "It goes against the grain," said George Q. Cannon, one of the leaders, "but I bow in submission to the will of God. We cannot fight sixty millions of people," wherein this Cannon was very right, and the head of the same was well located.

It must be said that the Mormons have taken their own time in obeying the law. They first proclaimed polygamy as a part of their faith and practice in September 1852. The United States judges in Utah condemned this action, and the Mormons



BRIGHAM YOUNG.

ran them out of the territory. Col. Steppe was sent there in 1854 by President Pierce, and was "tricked," as the phrase went. The next set of judges and officials were run out, and in 1857 the "Mormon war" began. In 1858 President Buchanan annulled the Saints, and matters were allowed to drift till 1862, when congress passed the first law against polygamy. The Mormons tried the old trick of scaring away the officials, but Governor Stephen Harding and Judges Waite and Drake declined to run.

The jury system was then used by the Saints to defeat the law. Congress in 1874 passed an act to secure non-Mormon juries, but the Saints beat it. They had had forty years' experience in defeating the law, and hence could steer around the most obstructive constitutional provisions and pierce the center of the most explicit statute. The federal courts were completely defeated as to polygamy, but they got after the Saints for the Mountain Meadow massacre and other bloody crimes of the old era of fanaticism—to wit, from 1854 to 1866. They captured, convicted and shot John D. Lee; scared a hundred other murderers out of the territory; forced a confession from Bill Hickman, chief of the "Destroying Angels," and worried Brigham Young to death. Still the Saints clung to polygamy, declaring that God had commanded it and they would live up to it.



WILFORD WOODRUFF.

"though every prison in the land be filled with the brethren, and hell should yawn beneath the tabernacle."

Finally Senator Edmunds brought in his truly drastic bill taking the whole government of Utah out of the hands of the Mormons, and giving courts, juries and everything else to Gentiles. Then the last long fight began. The Mormons stood up to it like heroes. Had they may be, but they are "gritty rascals." Court after court sent them to the penitentiary, first singly and then by dozens, and still they stood out and protested and suffered. President John Taylor, who had succeeded Brigham, had to fly from home and died an exile.

Apostle Wilford Woodruff succeeded him and advised the brethren to temporize. A case was carried to the supreme court of the United States and decided against the Saints, and this gave him his opportunity. In one of the "revelations" of Joseph Smith he found this passage:

"Now, brethren, as touching the ordinances, wherein is manifested the forbearance of God the Father, thus saith the Lord: If so be that I command my people and your enemies come upon you that you be not able to do that which I commanded, then I the Lord will hold you guiltless. Nevertheless I the Lord will require it at the hands of your enemies."
 That was his warrant. It had excused the saints from complying the temple at

Nauvoo and from obeying the command to settle in Jackson county, Mo. It now excused them from obeying the revelation ordaining "celestial marriage."

"The brethren have suffered enough," said Brer Woodruff; "eight hundred of them have languished in prison and exile; we must now obey the law of the land. I have lately talked behind the veil with Joseph Smith and Brother Brigham, and they, with all the heavenly host, say that the United States government must now bear the guilt. When God shall come out of his hiding place and vex the nations in his fury, then will the United States beg us to intercede for them and to live our religion. Until then give place to wrath; and God's will be done."

George Q. Cannon, next in rank to President Woodruff, added his own revelation that this was the will of God. "Brother Woodruff has lately been in executive session with the Almighty. The sufferings of the Saints are recorded in heaven, and will appear as the brightest page in earthly history. I lived in polygamy because such was the will of God. I now give it up for the same reason." And so ends a social practice which for forty-seven years has been the one great anomaly among the religious sects of America.

July 12, 1843, according to Joseph Smith, the voice of the Lord commanded him to write that famous revelation beginning: "Verily thus saith the Lord unto you my servant Joseph, that inasmuch as you have inquired at my hand to know wherein I the Lord justified my servants Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, as also Moses and David and Solomon my servants, as touching the principle and practice of their having many wives and concubines, behold and lo, I am the Lord and will answer thee as touching this matter."

And when he got orders to spread the doctrine he was, he adds, so horrified that he mounted his horse and fled; but when he got on the hill east of Nauvoo a mighty angel stood in the way with a drawn sword and menaced his life. So he went back and was "sealed" to Olive Frost and Eliza Snow and the Widow Fuller and nobody knows how many more; but when he sought Nancy Rigdon and Martha Brotherton they "gave the whole snap dead away," and there was a row in the church. It was smoothed over, the Apostles were first converted, and Brigham Young took three extra wives as a starter. Then Joseph Smith tried to capture the wife of William Law, and there was another row; Smith was lodged in a Gentile jail, and there was murdered by a mob with his brother Hyrum on the 27th of June, 1844.

The Mormons then put forth a circular denying the existence of polygamy among them, and continued to repeat this denial for nine years after the revelation. All this time they were extending the practice. But when their envoys had convinced President Fillmore that there was no polygamy in Utah, and he had appointed Brigham Young governor, they came out with the truth in September, 1852. So polygamy among the Mormons has passed through four stages—secret practice but open denial for nine years; open avowal and rapid progress from 1852 to about 1863; gradual decline from natural causes till 1882, and thereafter rapid extinction by force of the Federal government, to final abandonment in October, 1890. And let all the people say "Amen!"

J. H. BEADLE.